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2005-271-C

September 14, 2005

Mr. Charles L.A. Terreni  
Chief Clerk/Administrator  
Public Service Commission of South Carolina  
101 Executive Center Dr., Suite 100  
Columbia, SC 29210

Dear Mr. Terreni:

The SC Telephone Association (SCTA), in behalf of its members, the ILECs of the state, supports the purpose of the Office of Regulatory Staff's (ORS) September 9, 2005 petition regarding Lifeline/Link-Up assistance for evacuees of hurricane Katrina relocating to SC.

The SCTA applauds and supports the ORS' motion to expand the Lifeline/Linkup eligibility criteria for rendering assistance to those who have been affected by this storm. In fact, the SCTA has been actively investigating the same issue among its membership, with state agencies, and various associations that interface with Congress and the FCC. With the information we have obtained, it is the SCTA's belief that the current situation is being handled under existing Lifeline/Link-Up procedures and criteria already in place.

The SC Department of Social Services has informed SCTA that all Katrina evacuees coming to South Carolina are directed to the SC DSS which is automatically enrolling evacuees for food stamps and, in some cases, DHHS is enrolling them in Medicaid. Thus, the evacuees will automatically be eligible under the existing criteria for the Lifeline/ Link-Up programs should they seek residential telephone service anywhere in SC. Food Stamps, TANF and Medicaid are the criteria for Lifeline/Link-Up eligibility pursuant to PSC Lifeline/Linkup established procedures.

Further, SCTA has learned that housing for Katrina evacuees will be temporary, and housing is being handled in hotels, motels, etc. and other similar facilities from thirty to sixty days. This time period is based upon the belief that most evacuees will desire to return to their homes in the Katrina affected areas within that time frame.

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For those that choose to remain in SC, DSS and DHHS will review their eligibility for continued food stamps, Medicaid and/or other assistance. At that point, those who remain are likely to seek more permanent housing and residential telephone service. It is these evacuees that the Lifeline/Link-Up program would be available to provide assistance on their telephone bills under the current criteria.

While it appears all Katrina evacuees under the current DSS/DHHS enrollment procedures qualify under the current Lifeline/Link-Up criteria, including those that would seek residential telephone service, should the FCC expand its eligibility requirements and it become necessary, to cover those Katrina evacuees who for whatever reason do not get enrolled in the current criteria programs, SCTA supports expanding the eligibility requirements at the State level to coincide with the expanded federal requirements.

The SCTA stands ready to work with the ORS and the other agencies which are administering the aid programs to the Katrina evacuees.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. D. Pate", is written over the word "Sincerely,". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

J. D. Pate, MPA  
Executive Director